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Contested History: Brahmanical Memories of Relations with the Mughals

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Abstract

Brahman Sanskrit intellectuals enjoyed a century of relations with the Mughal elite. Nonetheless, such cross-cultural connections feature only sporadically in Persian chronicles, and Brahmans rarely elaborated on their imperial links in Sanskrit texts. In this essay I analyze a major exception to the Brahmanical silence on their Mughal connections, the *Kavīndracandrodaya* ("Moonrise of Kavīndra"). More than seventy Brahmans penned the poetry and prose of this Sanskrit work that celebrates Kavīndrācārya's successful attempt to persuade Emperor Shah Jahan to rescind taxes on Hindu pilgrims to Benares and Prayag (Allahabad). I argue that the *Kavīndracandrodaya* constituted an act of selective remembrance in the Sanskrit tradition of cross-cultural encounters in Mughal India. This enshrined memory was, however, hardly a uniform vision. The work's many authors demonstrate the limits and points of contestation among early moderns regarding how to formulate social and historical commentaries in Sanskrit on imperial relations.

Keywords

Brahmans – Mughals – Sanskrit – Persian – history – memory

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Introduction

By the mid-seventeenth century, Brahman Sanskrit intellectuals had enjoyed nearly a century of support from members of the Mughal elite. The Mughals were a Persian-speaking Islamicate dynasty with a sustained interest in traditional Indian knowledge systems and their intelligentsia. Brahman scholars first entered the central imperial court in the 1560s, following the Mughal expansion into eastern India under Emperor Akbar (r. 1556-1605).[1] Within twenty years, many Brahmans had become integrated into the fabric of courtly life and operated in a variety of often overlapping capacities. They served as astrologers for the Mughal emperors, resident scholars, informants on learned Indian traditions, translators, and political negotiators. Sanskrit-knowing Brahmans actively engaged with the Mughals throughout Jahangir's rule (1605-1627) and continued to populate the court well into Shah Jahan's reign (1628-1658).[2] Despite their enthusiastic participation in Mughal imperial life, however, Brahmans rarely elaborated in Sanskrit texts on their cross-cultural activities. Brief mentions of receiving Mughal patronage abound, but Brahman-authored Sanskrit narratives of events at the Mughal court are non-existent, and few texts offer even a glimpse into what imperial relations meant for Brahmanical communities culturally, socially, and religiously.[3] Brahmans were reluctant to reflect in Sanskrit literary texts upon their experiences regarding the Mughal imperial world.

Some scholars have tried to bypass this profound Brahmanical silence by pointing to unacknowledged Persianate influences in the literary production of certain Sanskrit writers. For example, Christopher Minkowski has argued that the sixteenth-century polymath Sūryadāsa modeled bidirectional poetry (*vilomakāvya*) on the Persian script, which reads right-to-left.[4] Sheldon Pollock has proposed that the personal tone of some of Jagannātha Paṇḍitarāja's

1 Mahāpātra Kṛṣṇadāsa, of Orissa, and Narasiṃha, first associated with the court of Gajapati Mukundadeva, are among the earliest datable Mughal-sponsored Sanskrit intellectuals. See A. Truschke *Culture of Encounters: Sanskrit at the Mughal Court* (New York: Columbia University Press, forthcoming): chap 1.

2 I outline this social history in ibid.: chap. 1.

3 In a few types of Sanskrit works, authors confronted the expanding Indo-Persian sphere, including its imperial facets, in limited ways, such as Sanskrit grammars of Persian. A. Truschke. "Defining the Other: An Intellectual History of Sanskrit Lexicons and Grammars of Persian." *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 40/6 (2012): 635-68.

4 C. Minkowski, "On Sūryadāsa and the Invention of Bidirectional Poetry (*vilomakāvya*)." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 121/1 (2001): 325-34.

poetry is indebted to Perso-Arabic literary practices.[5] Yigal Bronner and Gary Tubb have suggested a parallel influence on Jagannātha's poetic analysis.[6] While such instances of undisclosed crossovers remain important to identify, they show, among other things, how Brahmans typically omitted any overt recognition of cross-cultural connections. Even in cases in which Persianate influences can be detected centuries later, contemporary writers consistently declined to note (or perhaps failed to realize) their sources of inspiration. Can we find instances, however, of a more forthcoming approach whereby Brahmans tried to formulate a vision of what links with the Mughals meant for their social and intellectual communities? Such attempts would have important consequences for how we conceptualize Brahmanical Sanskrit culture in the early modern period and the importance of memory and forgetting in the Sanskrit tradition. To date, the Sanskrit text I have found that tries most overtly to define a Brahmanical memory of connections with the Mughal court is the *Kavīndracandrodaya*, composed to honor Kavīndrācārya Sarasvatī.

Kavīndrācārya was a Maharashtrian Brahman who was based in Benares. At some point he traveled to the court of the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan and engaged in various aspects of Mughal cultural life.[7] Among other activities, Kavīndra taught Sanskrit texts to members of the royal family and sang vernacular songs for the imperial assembly, as I discuss below. He was well paid for his efforts, and Shah Jahan's largesse helped Kavīndra build an impressive library of more than two thousand Sanskrit manuscripts.[8] Kavīndra's greatest imperial achievement, in the eyes of his fellow Brahmans, was that he convinced Shah Jahan to cease levying an onerous tax on Hindu pilgrims to Benaras and Prayag (Allahabad).[9] Kavīndra maintained his connection with the imperial

5 S. Pollock, "The Death of Sanskrit." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 43/2 (2001): 408-12.

6 Y. Bronner and G.A. Tubb, "Blaming the Messenger: A Controversy in Late Sanskrit Poetics and Its Implications." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 71/1 (2008): 87.

7 We do not know when Kavīndra first entered Shah Jahan's court, but he was known in imperial circles by at least 1652. K.R. Qanungo, "Some Side-Lights on the Character and Court-Life of Shah Jahan." *Journal of Indian History* 8/9 (1929): 51.

8 A.K. Sastry, *Kavindracharya List* (Baroda: Central Library, 1921). As Gode reminds us, however, this document is not to be taken as a fully accurate picture of Kavīndra's library. P.K. Gode, "The Kavīndracārya-Sūcī: Is It a Dependable Means for the Reconstruction of Literary Chronology?" *New Indian Antiquary* 6/2 (1943): 41-42. Today, many of Kavīndra's manuscripts are housed in the Anup Sanskrit Library, the Sarasvati Bhavan in Varanasi, and the Library of the Maharaja of Jammu.

9 The basic outline of Kavīndra's gaining tax relief is clear enough from the *Kavīndracandrodaya*, ed. H.D. Sharma and M.M. Patkar (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research

court until the end of Shah Jahan's rule. When Aurangzeb ʿAlamgir rose to power in 1658, he cut off Kavīndra's imperial stipend in a political move calculated to distinguish himself from his elder brother, Dara Shikuh, previously the likely successor to the throne.[10] Kavīndra was subsequently sponsored by Danishmand Khan, a Mughal notable, and later served for three years as a cultural intermediary for the European traveler Francois Bernier.[11]

The *Kavīndracandrodaya* was compiled in the mid-seventeenth century, during the height of Kavīndra's favor with Shah Jahan and after many decades of Brahman-Mughal relations. Neither Persian nor Sanskrit sources offer any linear narrative of precisely what it was that passed between Kavīndra and Shah Jahan that resulted in the cancellation of Hindu pilgrimage fees. However, dozens of Brahmans composed celebratory verses and prose extolling Kavīndra that were collected into two texts: the Sanskrit *Kavīndracandrodaya* ("Moonrise of Kavīndra") and the significantly shorter Hindi *Kavīndracandrikā* ("Moonlight of Kavīndra"). These praise poems appropriately parallel Kavīndra's own bifurcated production of Sanskrit and vernacular texts and his engagement with both traditions at the Mughal court.[12] Scholars have occasionally tried to pluck

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Institute, 1939). Several contributors specifically mention Varanasi and Prayag (e.g., *Kavīndracandrodaya*: verses 15, 24, 169, 180, and 284). Kavīndra also names Kashi and Prayag in his *Kavīndrakalpadruma* (*kāśīprayāgau*, verse 4) and in his *Kavīndrakalpalatā* (p. 2, verse 14, *kāsīkī aru prāgakī*). *Kavīndrakalpadruma*, ed. R.B. Athavale (Bombay: Asiatic Society of Bombay, 1981); *Kavīndrakalpalatā*, ed. L. Cundavat (Jaipur: Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute, 1958).

10 Truschke, *Culture of Encounters*: chap. 1 and conclusion.

11 P.K. Gode, "Some Evidence About the Location of the Manuscript Library of Kavindracharya Sarasvati at Benares in A.D. 1665." In *Jagadvijayacchandas*, ed. C.K. Raja (Bikaner: Anup Sanskrit Library, 1945): 47-57. More recently, see Pollock, "Death of Sanskrit": 407.

12 Kavīndra's known Sanskrit oeuvre includes the anthology *Kavīndrakalpadruma*, a commentary on Daṇḍin's *Daśakumāracarita* titled *Padacandrikā*, the *Jagadvijayacchandas*, the *Yogabhāskara*, a commentary on the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, the *Mīmāṃsāsarvasva*, and a (now fragmentary) commentary on the *Ṛgveda*. Kavīndra's Hindi works include the *Bhāṣāyogavāsiṣṭhasār*, also known as *Jñānsār* (a version of the *Laghuyogavāsiṣṭha*), the *Samarasār* (on astrology, unpublished), and the *Kavīndrakalpalatā* (a collection of poetry, songs, and various other materials). Most of these works are listed in *New Catalogus Catalogorum: An Alphabetical Register of Sanskrit and Allied Works and Authors*, ed. V. Raghavan, K.K. Raja, and T. Aufrecht (Madras: University of Madras, 1949–): 3: 289-91. Kavīndra's authorship of several of these works remains to be confirmed. For example, Patkar notes the thin evidence for Kavīndra's authorship of the *Padacandrikā*. M.M. Patkar, "Padacandrikā: A Commentary on the Daśakumāracarita by Kavīndrācārya Sarasvatī." *The Poona Orientalist* 4/3 (1939): 134-35.

historical information from these parallel praise poems, but they have rarely considered either work as a literary whole.

In this essay I examine the Sanskrit panegyric *Moonrise of Kavīndra* as a mode of historical memory for the early modern Brahman community. Praise poetry for kings and gods has a long history in India, especially in Sanskrit, but compiling a text honoring a community leader's political achievement has far fewer precedents.[13] One modern scholar has even dubbed the *Moonrise of Kavīndra* "the first festschrift in Sanskrit."[14] I am interested in this work because of its emphasis on a cross-cultural event and its corresponding implications for history and memory in early modern India. The *Kavīndracandrodaya* constituted an act of selective remembrance of cross-cultural encounters in Mughal India. Moreover, this enshrined memory was hardly a uniform vision. Nearly seventy named writers and many anonymous authors contributed to the Sanskrit praise poem,[15] which allows us to see the general contours of the project, as well as its limits and points of contestation.

Recovering the valence of the *Kavīndracandrodaya* is beset by a major methodological challenge that is helpful to address at the outset. Early modern Sanskrit authors inherited a strong penchant for conventions. This banal observation is true for many genres of Sanskrit works, but it is perhaps nowhere more evident than in praise poetry. Authors frequently recycled verses and even entire poems for different subjects. Original contributions often followed predictable patterns and set formulas. These conventions did not render Sanskrit praises devoid of meaning or prohibit specificity, but they made novelty a subtle art. Additionally, modern sensibilities are hardly calibrated to detect the nuances of seventeenth-century Sanskrit panegyrists. As a result, Sanskrit encomiums, when read today, often seem vague and divorced from their social contexts. The *Kavīndracandrodaya* is no different, and many

13 One noteworthy precedent for the *Kavīndracandrodaya* is the *Nṛsiṃhasarvasvakāvya*, a collection of Sanskrit poetry and prose by more than seventy authors compiled by Saccidānandāśrama for Nṛsiṃhāśrama, a contemporary of Akbar. M.H. Shastri. *A Descriptive Catalogue of Sanskrit Manuscripts in the Government Collection under the Care of the Asiatic Society*, 2d ed. (Kolkata: Asiatic Society, 2005): 4: 81-85.

14 Pollock, "Death of Sanskrit": 407.

15 Sharma and Patkar list the sixty-nine named contributors (introd. to *Kavīndracandrodaya*: v-ix), and there are several anonymous contributions. The count of sixty-nine named authors is revised from Sharma's prior estimate of sixty-one named contributors based on one manuscript of the *Kavīndracandrodaya*. H.D. Sharma, "Forgotten Event of Shah Jehan's Reign." In *Mahamahopadhyaya Kuppuswami Sastri Commemoration Volume* (Madras: G.S. Press, 1936): 56-60.

contributions probably strike most modern readers as applicable to any laudable individual rather than as tailored to Kavīndra and Mughal tax relief. I take a two-pronged approach to these challenges by reading both with the grain of the text and against it. On one hand, I recover the contextual meanings often embedded in conventions by reading sensitively with an eye to how seventeenth-century readers would have understood seemingly generic formulations in rather specific ways. On the other hand, I highlight instances in which individual writers bent the rules, even slightly, or elaborated beyond a standard script and commented on contemporary affairs.

I analyze the *Moonrise of Kavīndra* in three major sections. I first explore the pertinent social and literary contexts for understanding the work and its framing. I then examine the poem's depiction of Kavīndra and the Mughals. In discussing the text's treatment of Kavīndra, I both provide a literary analysis of the work and bring out the cultural implications of the various ways of praising Kavīndra. Regarding the authors' handling of the Mughals, I engage with the overarching reluctance to discuss distinctive markers of new religious and social groups in Sanskrit and suggest some ways to tease out the contemporary import of lines mired in tradition. Having explored the *Kavīndracandrodaya*, I turn, at the end of the essay, to the question of historical memory and offer a few thoughts about what this peculiar work can tell us about historical sensibilities and modes of remembering the past in early modern India. The *Moonrise of Kavīndra* demonstrates the variety of approaches adopted by early moderns for formulating social and historical commentaries in Sanskrit on real-world events.

1 The Social Context and Historical Project of the *Kavīndracandrodaya*

There are a few pertinent contexts for understanding the *Kavīndracandrodaya*, beginning with the social history of Brahman-Mughal ties. By the time Kavīndra approached Shah Jahan, Brahman intellectuals had profited from nearly a century of ongoing associations with the central Mughal court. Beginning early in Akbar's reign, Brahmans entered the Mughal courts from across northern and central India, both through Rajput networks and also of their own accord, in search of the Mughals' well-known liberal patronage. Some Brahmans, like a variety of other Indians, learned Persian and entered imperial service. In contrast, Kavīndra and his ilk generally acted outside of the formal structures of imperial service—they did not receive imperial ranks (*manṣab*s), for example—and remained grounded in traditional Indian knowledge

systems.[16] Nonetheless, Sanskrit-knowing Brahmans participated in many aspects of the Mughal polity. For instance, Kavīndra sang vernacular praises for Shah Jahan and other members of the royal family and instructed them in Sanskrit texts.[17] Scholars have proposed, based on compelling circumstantial evidence, that the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* was among the works that Kavīndra introduced to the royal family.[18]

Brahmans had also long solicited the Mughals for favors, and, in Kavīndra's case, the goal was rescinding a tax levied on Hindu pilgrims to Benares and Prayag. Neither the Sanskrit nor Persian traditions offers details about this tax, its origins, or how long it had been in effect.[19] We are also unclear about how Kavīndra came to negotiate this policy. Based on attestations that Kavīndra served the Mughals as a scholar and singer, it seems most likely that he was first admitted to the Mughal court for these other reasons and then took the opportunity to solicit the emperor.[20] Several of Kavīndra's admirers in the *Moonrise of Kavīndra* allude to his other imperial activities (see below), but none elaborates on the precise circumstances that led him to request tax relief. We can nevertheless safely say that nobody was surprised by Kavīndra's mere presence at the Mughal court or his decision to participate in imperial life. Brahmans

16 For more information on Sanskrit-knowing Brahmans (and Jains) at the Mughal court, see Truschke, *Culture of Encounters*: chap. 1.

17 The *Kavīndracandrodaya* specifically mentions that Kavīndra's *subhāṣita* helped convince Shah Jahan to rescind the pilgrimage tax (verse 92). I translate this verse below.

18 Dara Shikuh commissioned a Persian translation of the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*. At the very least, this shows his interest in the text. Kavīndra was known to be learned in this work (*Kavīndracandrodaya*: verse 12) and even produced a Hindi summary of the work titled *Bhāṣāyogavāsiṣṭhasār*. Additionally, like all Mughal-sponsored translations of Sanskrit texts, Dara Shikuh's pandits probably produced their Persian version of the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* by first having the Sanskrit text translated into Hindi. In many cases, such Hindi translations probably remained oral, but it is possible that Kavīndra's *Bhāṣāyogavāsiṣṭhasār* constitutes a written intermediary Hindi translation for Dara's Persian *Yogavāsiṣṭha*. For this suggestion, see V.G. Rahurkar, "The *Bhāṣā-yogavāsiṣṭhasāra* of Kavīndrācārya Sarasvatī." *The Poona Orientalist* 21 (1956): 97-98. On Dara Shikuh's *Yogavāsiṣṭha*, see C.W. Ernst, "Muslim Studies of Hinduism? A Reconsideration of Arabic and Persian Translations from Indian Languages." *Iranian Studies* 36/2 (2003): 184.

19 To complicate matters further, modern scholars have often referred to this tax as a *jizya* (poll tax). Akbar had rescinded the *jizya*, and it was not reinstated fully until 1679, under Emperor Aurangzeb 'Alamgir.

20 V. Raghavan came to the same conclusion, based on his reading of the *Kavīndracandrodaya*. "Kavīndrācārya Sarasvatī." In *D.R. Bhandarkar Volume*, ed. B.C. Law (Calcutta: Indian Research Institute, 1940): 161. I discuss Kavīndra's singing below.

had been pursuing similar engagements for several generations. What appears to have been new in Kavīndra's case was the magnitude of the imperial concession he earned, which, in turn, prompted an unprecedented textual response on the part of his Brahmanical community.

Brahmans generally avoided extended reflections in Sanskrit on their activities at the Mughal court. In contrast, Jains produced at least half a dozen detailed Sanskrit narratives that chronicle their interactions with the Mughals. The Jain works fall within a variety of genres, including poetry, narrative writing, and chronicles (*kāvya, carita*, and *prabandha*, respectively). They also emerged from two different Jain sects, the Tapā and the Kharatara Gacchas. I have written about these Jain works elsewhere.[21] I bring them up here to highlight a basic but often overlooked point: the Brahmanical textual muteness about the Mughals was not predetermined but a meaningful choice. Sanskrit writers were generally slow to respond to social changes and hesitant to introduce new groups into their social imagination, as many scholars have noted.[22] But we have been far too hasty in declaring a total absence of Sanskrit texts that respond to the advent of Indo-Islamic rule.[23] By the mid-seventeenth century, there were many Jain works in Sanskrit that displayed a broad spectrum of options regarding whether to write about such topics and how to do so. In the face of such evidence, the Brahmanical reluctance to write about the Mughals requires serious analysis and explanation, rather than blasé acceptance. I leave for another day consideration of the overarching Brahmanical decision not to discuss their imperial links in Sanskrit literature. Here I investigate the *Kavīndracandrodaya*, the text that partially broke the Brahmanical prohibition against incorporating Mughal events into Sanskrit.

Sixty-nine named authors contributed to the *Kavīndracandrodaya*, and there are several anonymous passages. Altogether, the work contains more than three hundred Sanskrit verses, numerous lengthy prose passages, and a

21 Truschke, *Culture of Encounters*: chap. 5, and A. Truschke, "Setting the Record Wrong: A Sanskrit Vision of Mughal Conquests." *South Asian History and Culture* 3/3 (2012): 373-96.

22 Regarding Muslims in particular, e.g., B. Chattopadhyaya, *Representing the Other? Sanskrit Sources and the Muslims* (*Eighth to Fourteenth Century*) (New Delhi: Manohar, 1998); B. Leclère, "Ambivalent Representations of Muslims in Medieval Indian Theatre." *Studies in History* 27/2 (2011): 155-95.

23 Some scholars have fruitfully suggested that we read certain references to demons, infidels, and the like as stand-ins for Islamic figures. See A. Nicholson, *Unifying Hinduism: Philosophy and Identity in Indian Intellectual History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010): 190-196; S. Pollock, "*Rāmāyaṇa* and Political Imagination in India." *Journal of Asian Studies* 52/2 (1993): 261-97. Such covert approaches are separate from what I seek to discuss here.

few Prakrit and Marathi lines.[24] A writer named Kṛṣṇa[25] assembled the verses and prose into a single work, grouping the praises of each author together. Kṛṣṇa also penned a series of introductory verses that describe Kavīndra and the reasons behind the work. Kṛṣṇa, in one of the earliest verses in the text, characterizes the encomium as a cooperative effort:

> Composed by the glorious luminaries of Kashi that are good poets, the similar inhabitants of Prayag, and residents of all lands who delight in great learning, this collection of verses was written down by glorious Kṛṣṇa and is dedicated to glorious, venerable Kavīndra, the lord of good poets, who is a treasure house of knowledge, known by the name teacher (*ācārya*), and yoked with the title *sarasvatī*.[26]

Roughly one-third of the encomium's authors can be identified with known figures of the period, and a few additional writers state their relationship to Kavīndra (e.g., his students) or their geographical location (e.g., the learned of Varanasi).[27] So far as we know, however, the overwhelming majority of contributors to this encomium had no personal connection with the Mughal court. Rather, Brahman literati across the board judged that Kavīndra had engaged

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24 The text has been edited by Sharma and Patkar, based on three manuscripts (Sharma and Patkar, introd. to *Kavīndracandrodaya*: iii). Several additional manuscript copies in northern and central India are listed (some twice) in *New Catalogus Catalogorum*: 3: 288-89.

25 For ease of reference, I give the names of all contributors as they appear in the introduction to *Kavīndracandrodaya*: v-ix.

26 *Kavīndracandrodaya*: verse 9.

27 In the introduction to the *Kavīndracandrodaya*, Sharma and Patkar identify twenty-four of the sixty-nine named contributors (v-ix). In addition, others have proposed the following identifications. Brahmendra Sarasvatī is probably identical with Nṛsiṃhāśrama, known from a Sanskrit letter and a *nirṇayapatra* (letter of judgment), dated 1657, regarding a caste dispute. See P.K. Gode, "The Identification of Gosvāmi Nṛsiṃhāśrama of Dara Shukoh's Sanskrit Letter with Brahmendra Sarasvatī of the Kavīndra-Candrodaya—Between A.D. 1628 and 1658." In *Studies in Indian Literary History* (Bombay: Singhi Jain Sastra Sikshapith, 1954): 2: 447-51. A few additional contributors, such as Pūrṇendra Sarasvatī, also signed the 1657 *nirṇayapatra*. See R. O'Hanlon, "Letters Home: Banaras Pandits and the Maratha Regions in Early Modern India." *Modern Asian Studies* 44/2 (2010): 229-33. Chaudhuri notes that Gurjara Kavi and Nageśa Paṇḍita, son of Somarāja Paṇḍita, are also cited in the *Subhāṣitasārasamuccaya*. J.B. Chaudhuri, "Some Unknown or Less Known Sanskrit Poets Discovered from the *Subhāṣita-sāra-samuccaya*." In *B.C. Law Volume*, ed. D.R. Bhandarkar et al. (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1946): 2: 145-58. In addition, Vrajabhūṣaṇa (*Kavīndracandrodaya*: verse 102) is probably the same Vrajabhūṣaṇa who wrote the *Pārasīprakāśavinoda* ("Play of the Light on Persian," 1659).

with the Mughals in a manner that was proper to commemorate, in particular ways, in Sanskrit praise poetry.

The intended audience for the *Moonrise of Kavīndra* was at least twofold. The direct addressee of the text is Kavīndra himself, whom the work exalts. But Kṛṣṇa, its compiler, also outlines a second broader reception at the beginning of the text:

> Warding off the mass of utter darkness, removing the anguish of all wise men, let this composition called the *Moonrise of Kavīndra* traverse the world.[28]

Here Kṛṣṇa projects an audience far beyond a single individual. This envisioned wide readership is confirmed by the first eight verses of the work, authored by Kṛṣṇa, which briefly review Kavīndra's biography, including his scholarly training and receipt of titles.[29] Other contributors offer little indication about who, beyond Kavīndra, they hoped would read their praises. A few ask Kavīndra for specific concessions, including financial assistance and his help liberating another city "from the siege of oppressors."[30] Several take the opportunity to show off their poetic skills or display mastery of various meters.[31] But it is unclear whether such efforts were meant for Kavīndra's appreciation, intended to please learned readers more generally, or simply appropriately typified the tribute to Kavīndra.

We know little about the actual reception of the *Kavīndracandrodaya*. Kavīndra himself certainly appreciated the text and reproduced seven verses that address his learning and high esteem among the Benaras-based

28 *Kavīndracandrodaya*: verse 2. In another verse (32), Kṛṣṇa similarly proclaims that the encomium ought to be taught.

29 Kavīndra was trained in the Āśvalāyana śākhā (a Vedic school of thought), renounced the world in his youth, and received the titles *kavīndra* (lord of poets), *vidyānidhāna* (treasure house of knowledge), and *ācārya* (teacher) (*Kavīndracandrodaya*: verses 3-8). Several secondary sources have summarized Kavīndra's life (e.g., Athavale, introduction to *Kavīndrakalpadruma* and Raghavan, "Kavīndrācārya Sarasvatī").

30 I discuss below the plea for money. Līlādhara, a southerner, solicits Kavīndra's help in liberating the town of Prakasha (*prakāśā*) in verse 159 (on this, also see Raghavan, "Kavīndrācārya Sarasvatī": 162).

31 Many verses use alliteration and other tropes. The display of metric versatility is in verses 231-46, where Mahādeva Paṭṭavardhana offers variants on the same verse in several meters (including some unfamiliar to me). Between verses, he notes the changes that will transform one meter into the next. The same author offers prose praises that put Kavīndra in a succession of Sanskrit grammatical cases (pp. 41-48).

Brahmanical community in his vernacular version of the *Laghuyogavāsiṣṭha*.[32] Others copied the work at least a few times, and manuscripts reside today in Bombay, Calcutta, and Bikaner.[33] One of Kavīndra's protégés, Janārdana Vyāsa, borrows verses from the first two contributors to the panegyric in his commentary on Mammaṭa's *Kāvyaprakāśa*.[34] Notwithstanding its seemingly limited reception, the imagined large audience of the *Kavīndracandrodaya* stands in stark contrast to the Brahmanical reticence to write anything in Sanskrit about most of their imperial activities. Dozens of Brahmans agreed that Kavīndra's actions merited a Sanskrit praise poem devoted entirely to commemorating his encounter with the Mughals. The content of their eulogies offers a wealth of insights concerning how Brahmans, as individuals and a community, decided to memorialize Kavīndra's political achievement.

2 Commemorating Kavīndra through Sanskrit Conventions

The majority of contributors to the *Kavīndracandrodaya* offer standard tributes that invoke Kavīndra's name but no other historical details. Nonetheless, we should not hastily brand all such praises bland and generic, lacking any contemporary context. Early modern Sanskrit intellectuals developed sophisticated methods of commenting on specific circumstances by working through the conventions of their tradition. Take for example Jagannātha Paṇḍitarāja, who penned a Sanskrit encomium directed to Asaf Khan, Shah Jahan's vizier.[35]

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32 Kavīndra wrote his Braj Bhasha (literary Hindi) version of the *Laghuyogavāsiṣṭha*, titled *Bhāṣāyogavāsiṣṭhasār* (also known as *Jñānsār*), in 1656-1657. S. Pollock, "The Languages of Science in Early Modern India." In *Forms of Knowledge in Early Modern Asia: Explorations in the Intellectual History of India and Tibet, 1500-1800*, ed. S. Pollock (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011): 28. Compare *Kavīndracandrodaya*: verses 174-80, and the *Bhāṣāyogavāsiṣṭhasār*'s introductory verses printed in K.M.K. Sarma, "Kavīndrācārya as a Hindi Scholar." *Adyar Library Bulletin* 7/1 (1943): 35. The Hindi text was translated into Persian in the mid-eighteenth century. T. Chand, "Rāfi'-ul-Khilāf of Sita Ram Kayastha Saksena, of Lucknow (Kavīndrācārya's Jñānasāra and Its Persian Translation)." *Journal of the Ganganatha Jha Research Institute* 2/1 (1944): 712.

33 See manuscripts listed in *New Catalogus Catalogorum*: 3: 288-89.

34 K.M.K. Sarma prints the verses in his "Janārdana Vyāsa: A Protege of Kavīndrācārya." *The Journal of Oriental Research Madras*, 16/4 (1947): 178-81. V. Raghavan discusses the overlap with verses from the *Kavīndracandrodaya* in "A Note on Janārdana Vyāsa and Kavīndrācārya." *The Journal of Oriental Research Madras* 16/4 (1947): 182.

35 Jagannātha Paṇḍitarāja, *Āsaphavilāsa*. In *Pandita Raja Kavya Samgraha: Complete Poetical Works of Panditaraja Jagannatha*, ed. K. Kamala (Hyderabad: Sanskrit Academy, Osmania University, 2002).

In the work Jagannātha avoids any overt contemporary references, aside from a few names. Nonetheless, he draws upon aspects of the Sanskrit tradition that would have resonated with a Mughal audience, such as admiring Kashmir's gardens, a classic Sanskrit theme and a particular interest of Asaf Khan.[36] The authors of the *Kavīndracandrodaya* adopted similar convergent approaches that enabled them to speak about their contemporary situation without stepping outside of their inherited tradition.

Many Brahmans frame Kavīndra as a savior, often comparing him to Hindu gods and their incarnations, typically without specifying what he did to justify such lofty comparisons. Popular references include Vishnu's various avatars that are known for rescuing the world. For example Vrajabhūṣaṇa, a man who pursued his own interactions with the Persianate world,[37] marvels that, "Having taken on mendicant clothing, Kavīndra lifted up Prayag that was drowning in an ocean of taxes, just as Vishnu [in his boar incarnation] rescued the earth that was drowning in the grip [of the demon Hiraṇyakṣa]."[38] Many authors laud Kavīndra's generosity, and specifically eulogize his compassion (*kṛpā, dayā*) and empathy (*kāruṇya/karuṇa*) with the hardships faced in the world.[39] The figures of Dadhīci, Bali, and Karṇa arise in a few verses and are celebrated for their selfless munificence.[40] Without specifically mentioning tax relief for religious pilgrims, such homages encapsulated Kavīndra's successful negotiations with Shah Jahan.

Many authors hail Kavīndra's legendary learning, including his knowledge of the *śāstra*s and poetics. Several admire Kavīndra's mastery of a range of philosophical traditions. One panegyrist proclaims Kavīndra the equal of

36 Truschke, *Culture of Encounters*: chap. 2, and A. Truschke, "Regional Perceptions: Writing to the Mughal Courts in Sanskrit." In *Cosmopolitismes en Asie du Sud. Sources, itinéraires, langues* (*XVI^e-XVIII^e siècle*), ed. C. Lefèvre, I. Županov, and J. Flores (Paris: Editions de l'EHESS, 2015).

37 Vrajabhūṣaṇa composed the *Pārasīprakāśavinoda* ("Play of the Light on Persian," 1659), an abridgment of Vedāṅgarāya's Sanskrit-Persian astronomical lexicon, titled *Pārasīprakāśa* ("Light on Persian"), written for Shah Jahan. S.R. Sarma, "Persian-Sanskrit Lexica and the Dissemination of Islamic Astronomy and Astrology in India." In *Kayd: Studies in History of Mathematics, Astronomy and Astrology in Memory of David Pingree*, ed. G. Gnoli and A. Panaino (Rome: Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente, 2009): 144-46.

38 *Kavīndracandrodaya*: verse 102.

39 For example, *Kavīndracandrodaya*: verse 39 and verses 52 and 310, respectively.

40 For example, *Kavīndracandrodaya*: verses 96 and 136. Note also similar comparisons to Karṇa (among other figures) in verses 275 and 172.

the founders of the six schools of Indian philosophy.[41] An anonymous writer from Mithila positions Kavīndra among such great poets as Vālmīki, Vyāsa, and Kālidāsa.[42] A contributor known as Kūrmācala Vīreśvara Paṇḍita covers philosophical, liturgical, and poetic expertise in a verse that imagines Kavīndra's speech as a beautiful woman who embodies traditional Indian learning:

> Your speech—whose body is the Vedic canon, whose auspicious forehead mark is Yoga, whose lovely earrings are Vedānta, whose bracelet is Mīmāṃsā, whose belt is the Āgama, the splendor of whose necklace is Vaiśeṣika, whose tinkling anklets are Sāṃkhya, whose brilliant clothes are sophisticated literature, whose diadem is Nyāya—O Kavīndra, your dancing speech is victorious.[43]

As Kūrmācala Vīreśvara Paṇḍita says in his closing line, Kavīndra's oratorical skills helped him triumph. He leaves implied, however, that Kavīndra's role as an instructor of the Mughals left him well positioned him to gain "victorious" tax relief.

Other contributors also indicate obliquely the relationship between Kavīndra's erudition and his successful encounter with Shah Jahan. For instance, a prose section by "the renouncers and pandits who live in Kashi" (*kāśīsthasannyāsipaṇḍitānām*) esteems Kavīndra "as skilled in initiating decrees, just as he is skilled in [giving] good advice" (*hitopadeśakuśalānapi vihitopadeśakuśalān*).[44] The line leaves it unclear to whom Kavīndra is imparting guidance, but the Mughals are the likely recipients. In addition to linking his tutoring of the Mughals with eliciting a royal order, this praise cleverly works in the phrase *hitopadeśa* "[giving] good advice," which is also the title of a popular Sanskrit book of instructive fables. As everyone of that time would have known, the *Hitopadeśa* and other *Pañcatantra* works were popular among Mughal intellectuals and repeatedly translated into and reworked in Persian.[45] We do not know for certain that Kavīndra's instruction to Shah Jahan

41 *Kavīndracandrodaya*: verse 309. The six schools are Mīmāṃsā, Vedānta, Sāṃkhya, Yoga, Vaiśeṣika, and Nyāya.

42 *Kavīndracandrodaya*: verse 269. Several other verses also compare Kavīndra favorably to Kālidāsa or other poets (e.g., *Kavīndracandrodaya*: verses 183, 304, 305, and 306).

43 *Kavīndracandrodaya*: verse 50.

44 *Kavīndracandrodaya*: p. 31.

45 The *Pañcatantra* had been known in the Persianate world since the sixth century CE, when it was translated into Middle Persian. D. Riedel reviews the later Persian redactions in "Kalila wa Demna I. Redactions and Circulation." In *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (http://www.iranica.com/, 2010). Akbar sponsored two Persian versions of the *Pañcatantra*: *Iyār-i*

and other members of the royal court included the *Hitopadeśa*, but even the veiled suggestion of this work in the *Kavīndracandrodaya* reminds readers of the multifaceted relations between Sanskrit intellectuals and Mughal elites.

Some Brahmans chose to address more specifically Kavīndra's high esteem at the Mughal court. Several poets celebrate that he received the Sanskrit title of *vidyānidhāna* ("treasure house of knowledge"), also sometimes given as *sarvavidyānidhāna* ("treasure house of all knowledge"), from Shah Jahan.[46] One writer, Pūrṇānanda Brahmacārin, presents a series of verses that cite this designation, which he directly connects with Kavīndra's feat of introducing Sanskrit learning to Shah Jahan. For instance:

> Kavīndra, lord of the three worlds, teaches the Lord of Delhi everyday according to knowledge of the Vedas, sacred texts, and *śāstra*s. Even though famous for releasing major pilgrimage sites from royal tax and honored with [the title] *vidyānidhāna*, [Kavīndra] does not fall prey to pride.[47]

Two verses by separate authors attribute Kavīndra's receipt of the title *vidyānidhāna* to compassion (*kṛpā*). But one author speaks of Shah Jahan's benevolence, while the other extols Kavīndra's empathy.[48] Kavīndra's title carried significant cultural cachet in Brahman literary circles. Kavīndra himself claimed it in both his Sanskrit and Hindi writings, and it is also written on manuscripts held in his library.[49]

Some authors indicate how Kavīndra may have achieved a place of pride in imperial circles. Several mention Kavīndra's debating prowess, and a few even call attention to his renowned argumentative skills in the context of the royal

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Dānish ("Touchstone of the Intellect"), which reworked an earlier Persian rendition, and another, *Panchākhyāna*, which was based on a Jain recension of the Sanskrit work.

46 For example, *Kavīndracandrodaya*: verses 39, 115, 116, and 118. The title is also mentioned in the majority of prose contributions in the *Kavīndracandrodaya*. The Mughal emperors Akbar and Jahangir bestowed Sanskrit, Hindi, and Persian titles on Brahman intellectuals, so Shah Jahan was acting within an established tradition in this regard (Truschke, *Culture of Encounters*: chap. 1).

47 *Kavīndracandrodaya*: verse 115.

48 Respectively, *śrīmatsāhijahāṃdilīpakṛpayā* (*Kavīndracandrodaya*: verse 116) and *bhavatkṛpātaḥ* (*Kavīndracandrodaya*: verse 39).

49 Colophon to the *Daśakumāracarita* as quoted in M. Krishnamachariar, *History of Classical Sanskrit Literature*, 3d ed. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2004): 373-B. See also the colophon to sections of his *Laghuyogavāsiṣṭhasār* (Sarma, "Kavīndrācārya as a Hindi Scholar": 36). Sastry mentions the title being used on Kavīndra's manuscripts (*Kavindracharya's List*: v).

court.[50] While we know of no specific instances involving Kavīndra orating before Shah Jahan, Brahmans and Jains both regularly participated in Mughal-led debates. These exchanges often involved religious questions. Sometimes Jains and Brahmans argued with each other about long-standing points of dispute.[51] In other cases, the Mughals pressed members of one tradition on a specific contention. For example, a Brahman who visited Jahangir in the company of Ramdas Kachhwaha was asked to explain why Hindus considered the mouths of cows polluted, given that they revere the animal.[52] Probably playing on similar themes, Kṣmānanda Vājapeyin lauds Kavīndra as "one whose logic dances in the court."[53]

Despite portraying Kavīndra as learned and wise, the contributors seem to evade describing explicitly how he used such faculties to gain tax relief. Nīlakaṇṭha Ācārya[54] comes closest in his only verse in the work:

> O Kavīndra! Freed by you from the grasp of imperial taxes through [teaching the king] commentaries (*bhāṣya*), poetry (*subhāṣita*), etc., Glorious Kashi is glorified by the feet of sages and enlightens people in good and bad speech, just as the *Kāśikā* commentary, freed by your own hand, O World-ruler, with [your] writing about the [*Mahā*]*bhāṣya*, illuminates correct usage and provides wisdom concerning speech and mis-speech.[55]

50 Specific mentions of Kavīndra's debating skills in the royal assembly are found in *Kavīndracandrodaya*: verse 28 and prose on p. 35.

51 See, e.g., S. Jain, "Piety, Laity and Royalty: Jains Under the Mughals in the First Half of the Seventeenth Century." *Indian Historical Review* 40/1 (2013): 74, and Truschke, *Culture of Encounters*: chap. 5.

52 'Abd al-Sattār ibn Qāsim Lāhaurī, *Majālis-i Jahāngīrī*, ed. A. Nawshahi and M. Nizami (Tehran: Markaz-i Pizhuhishi Miras-i Maktub, 2006): 95-98. C. Lefèvre discusses this episode in "Splendours and Miseries of Scholar-Intellectuals at the Mughal Court: A View from the *Majālis-i Jahāngīrī* (1608-1611)" (paper presented at Paris, 2012).

53 *Kavīndracandrodaya*: verse 56.

54 Sharma and Patkar suggest that this may be Bhaṭṭa Nīlakaṇṭha but do not appear very confident in this identification (introd. to *Kavīndracandrodaya*: vii).

55 *Kavīndracandrodaya*: verse 92. The verse depends upon a *śleṣa* (double entendre), which I have translated both ways by introducing a simile ("just as") for clarity. V. Raghavan read this verse as referring to Śaṅkara's *Bhāṣya* ("Kavīndrācārya Sarasvatī": 161). Based on the strong play on grammatical terms in the verse, however, I find it more likely to refer to Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya* in the second reading. I am grateful to Victor D'Avella and an anonymous reviewer for their assistance interpreting this verse.

It is difficult to imagine Kavīndra working through a Sanskrit commentary (*bhāṣya*) with the Mughal emperor. Although more plausible is the notion that Shah Jahan admired Kavīndra's eloquence and grasp of philosophy. Another admirer, Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa Gurjara, likewise emphasizes Kavīndra's poetic dexterity in an imperial context, admiring him as "lord of poets in the sultan's court" (*suratrāṇasaṃsatkavīndra*).[56] In the same verse, this poet lauds Kavīndra as *suratrāṇakārī*, a phrase that has the double meaning of "rescuer of the gods" and "king-maker." An anonymous author simply salutes Kavīndra as "conqueror of the king" (*kṣitipativijayī*).[57]

While most authors eschew detailed descriptions of Kavīndra's interactions with the Mughals, they regularly imagine Kavīndra as a king complete with the trappings of royal authority. Many writers marvel at Kavīndra's fame, an attribute frequently associated with royalty in Sanskrit. Few contributors state directly that Kavīndra's fame is the result of his encounter with Shah Jahan, although the poets occasionally note the Mughal emperor's crucial role in making Kavīndra a celebrity. For instance, Mādhavabhaṭṭa celebrates that "the rise of your esteem was enacted by the king."[58] Kavīndra is also occasionally compared to a ruler in the work. For example, after borrowing openly from Bāṇa's *Kādambarī*, Mauni Viśveśvara Bhaṭṭa adds the acclamation that Kavīndra ought to "live long like a king."[59] In one of his six verses, Pūrṇānanda Brahmacārin fancies Kavīndra a king (*nṛpati*) and imagines his home in Kashi as a royal court.[60] Others play upon imagery typically associated with victorious monarchs in Sanskrit. For instance, Mauni Raṅganāthabhaṭṭa describes the weeping wives of Kavīndra's slaughtered enemies, a common image in royal praises that underscores a king's success in battle.[61]

Rather than liken Kavīndra to a monarch, some Brahmans elected to commend the virtues that set Kavīndra apart from the worldly Mughal court, even when the details they provide are not historically accurate. For example, Kṣmānanda Vājapeyin celebrates that Kavīndra rejected Shah Jahan's offer of wealth and instead demanded relief for religious pilgrims:

56 *Kavīndracandrodaya*: verse 324.

57 Ibid.: verse 307.

58 Ibid.: verse 45 (*mānonnatiṃ tava narendrakṛtām*).

59 *mahendra iva ciraṃ jīvatu* (*Kavīndracandrodaya*: p. 25). The corresponding section of the *Kādambarī* is praising the sage Jabali, not a sovereign. Bāṇa, *Kādambarī*, ed. by Kashinath Pandurang Parab (Bombay: Nirnaya Sagara Press, 1890): 1: 89. This change suggests a conscious attempt to treat Kavīndra as a royal figure, going beyond the parallel section of Bāṇa's *Kādambarī*.

60 *Kavīndracandrodaya*: verse 113.

61 Ibid.: verse 226.

> For the hordes of elephants and horses, gold, and lines of jewels that were being offered, Kavīndra had no thirst. He was committed to the deliverance of all pilgrimage places. Surely a mass of rainclouds takes no pleasure in rain?[62]

As a point of comparison, Jain sources likewise praise their leaders for refusing Mughal financial compensation. For instance, the late-sixteenth-century Jain writer Padmasāgara describes how Akbar offered a Jain monk heaps of wealth on platters, from which the mendicant turned away in disgust.[63] One verse in the *Kavīndracandrodaya* even tenders similar imagery.[64] The difference is that, so far as we know, Jain claims about rejecting Mughal wealth are accurate, but, in the case of Kavīndra, the boast is false.

Persian and European sources both attest that Kavīndra accepted cash payments from the Mughals. According to Shah Jahan's historians, Kavīndra was rewarded for his skills as a vernacular singer and writer. Two Persian-language chroniclers, Muḥammad Sāliḥ Kambūh and Muḥammad Vāriṣ, record that "Kabīndar Sanyāsī," who was skilled in *dhrupad*s and Hindi compositions (*taṣnīfāt-i hindī*), entered Shah Jahan's court and received two thousand rupees and a robe of honor—and a horse, Vāriṣ adds—in exchange for pleasing the emperor.[65] Vāriṣ also mentions at least one other occasion on which Kavīndra met Shah Jahan at Lahore and received 1500 rupees.[66] Francois Bernier, a French visitor to Mughal India, confirms this financial arrangement, although he perceived the stipend as rewarding Kavīndra's erudition. He writes: "[Kavīndra] is

62 Ibid.: verse 58. Similar imagery of a wise man refusing financial compensation for greater gain appears elsewhere in the Sanskrit tradition. For example, in the *Kaṭhopaniṣad*, Naciketas refuses Yama's offer of horses, gold, elephants, and other things in exchange for learning about death and immortality. *Kaṭhopaniṣadbhāṣya of Śrīraṅgarāmānuja*, ed. K.C. Varadachari and D.T. Tatacharya (Tirupati: Sri Venkatesvara Oriental Institute, 1949): 1: 1: 24. I thank Anand Venkatkrishnan for the reference.

63 Padmasāgara "Jagadgurukāvya." In *Vijayapraśastimahākāvya*, ed. Hargovinddas and Becardas (Benares: Harakhchand Bhurabhai, 1911): verses 175-76.

64 *Kavīndracandrodaya*: verse 163.

65 Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Kambūh, *ʿAmal-i Ṣāliḥ or Shah Jahan Namah* (*a Complete History of the Emperor Shah Jahan*), ed. G. Yazdani, 3 vols. (Bibliotheca Indica. Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1923): 3: 122, and the *Pādshāhnāmah* of Vāriṣ as cited in Chand, "Rāfi'-ul-Khilāf": 8-9. The wording of these two works is similar. Using Kambūh's version, Allison Busch has suggested that this episode records Shah Jahan rewarding Kavīndra for the *Kavīndrakalpalatā*. A. Busch, "Hidden in Plain View: Brajbhasha Poets at the Mughal Court." *Modern Asian Studies* 44/2 (2010): 291-92.

66 Cited in Qanungo, "Character and Court-Life of Shah Jahan": 51.

a *Fakire* or *Devotee* so eminent for knowledge that *Chah-Jehan*, partly for that consideration, and partly to gratify the *Rajas*, granted him a pension of two thousand *roupies*, which is about one thousand *crowns*."[67]

While Sanskrit literati generally gloss over or even flatly deny these aspects of Kavīndra's links with the court, they were aware of both his singing and his receipt of cash. One Sanskrit writer, Muralīdhara, grandson of Kālidāsamiśra, explicitly notes Kavīndra's dual roles of singer and scholar for the Mughals, writing in the *Kavīndracandrodaya*: "The illustrious Svāmi Kavīndra learned knowledge and studied songs for everybody's sake, in order to protect cows and Brahmans from fear."[68] Some of Kavīndra's disciples also refer to their teacher's musical talents ("singer of the legions of virtues of Shiva and Vishnu").[69] Another contributor to the *Kavīndracandrodaya* calls Kavīndra a *kalāvant*, which was probably meant to have the dual meaning of somebody skilled in the arts (*kalā*) and a specific type of Indian singer popular among Mughal connoisseurs.[70] In terms of money, Kavīndra was widely famed for his financial generosity, and several poets discuss his liberality in the *Kavīndracandrodaya*. They acclaim him as "a destroyer of poverty" and somebody who "vanquishes lines of wishing trees in generosity."[71] His disciples note that he was "a great giver of *dinar*s to the poor."[72] Pūrṇānanda Brahmacārin offers the most explicit verse, celebrating Kavīndra for giving away gold (*suvarṇa*) at the Viśveśvara temple in Kashi.[73]

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67 F. Bernier, *Travels in the Mogul Empire, A.D. 1656-1668*, ed. V.A. Smith, trans. A. Constable (London: Oxford University Press, 1914): 341-42. Bernier does not give Kavīndra's name but offers a detailed description of a pandit who assisted him in Benares. P.K. Gode first identified Bernier's pandit as Kavīndrācārya in "Bernier and Kavīndrācārya Sarasvatī at the Mughal Court." In *Studies in Indian Literary History* (Bombay: Singhi Jain Sastra Sikshapith, 1954): 2: 364-79. Gode later provided additional evidence for this identification from the Persian tradition ("Location of the Manuscript Library of Kavindracharya"). Pollock has accepted that the two men are one ("Languages of Science": 27 and "Death of Sanskrit": 407-08).

68 *Kavīndracandrodaya*: verse 126.

69 *girīśagovindaguṇagaṇagāyakeṣu*, ibid.: 28.

70 On Mughal *kalāvant*s, see K.B. Schofield, "Chief Musicians to the Mughal Emperors: The Delhi Kalāwant Birāderī, 17th to 19th Centuries." *Journal of the Indian Musicological Society* (2013) Kalāvant can also mean moon, which may well have been another intended meaning here; I thank Robert Goldman for the suggestion.

71 *Kavīndracandrodaya*: verse 146.

72 *dīnāvalidīnāravṛndadāyakeṣu*, ibid.: 28.

73 Ibid.: verse 116 (*śrīviśveśvarakāśikāsuranadītīre suvarṇaṃ dadau*). For this reading, also see Rahurkar, "*Bhāṣā-yogavāsiṣṭhasāra* of Kavīndrācārya Sarasvatī": 101. On the importance of the Viśveśvara temple during this period, see R. O'Hanlon, "Speaking from Siva's

One author, Mahādeva Paṭṭavardhana, asks Kavīndra overtly to lend him two hundred rupees, presumably out of his more lucrative Mughal stipend.[74] Significantly, while Mahādeva Paṭṭavardhana offers numerous Sanskrit verses lauding Kavīndra's generosity, he switches to Marathi to make his explicit plea for financial assistance. Even the literary dialect of Braj Bhasha, the language of the *Kavīndracandrikā*, was not appropriate for such a topic. Mahādeva Paṭṭavardhana turned instead to Marathi, a vernacular understood widely in the North Indian Brahmanical community, including by Kavīndra, who was himself from Maharashtra.[75] Here we glimpse some of the limits of what Brahmans thought it appropriate to discuss in the transregional, cosmopolitan idiom of Sanskrit. Exalting Kavīndra's generosity was acceptable, but specific solicitations ought not to be enshrined in a high literary tongue.

3 Characterizing Mughal Imperial Culture in Sanskrit

Despite writing to commend successful negotiations with Shah Jahan, many contributors to Kavīndra's Sanskrit encomium do not mention the Mughals or explicitly discuss the imperial court. Sanskrit authors had long elided their social and political contexts. Given this literary inheritance, avoiding overt reference to the Mughals was probably the most time-honored option, especially for those seeking to fit an already innovative idea—writing an entire Sanskrit work to honor the cross-cultural activities of one Brahman—within a tradition that favored continuity. But sidestepping the Mughals was not the only option available to Brahman authors of the day. Several contributors openly invoke the Mughal imperial context in their encomia to Kavīndra. Such mentions tend to be brief but nonetheless demonstrate a notable range of approaches to incorporating the Mughals into Sanskrit literature.

Temple: Banaras Scholar Households and the Brahman 'ecumene' of Mughal India." *South Asian History and Culture* 2/2 (2011): 264-67.

74 Sharma and Patkar, introduction to *Kavīndracandrodaya*: v. Mahādeva Paṭṭavardhana contributed several verses (138-155 and 227-268) and prose passages to the *Kavīndracandrodaya*.

75 R. O'Hanlon has noted the prevalence of Marathi among Deccani Brahman migrants to North India during the seventeenth century ("Letters Home": 114). Kavīndra's Maharashtrian origins are indicated by these verses, several of Kavīndra's Hindi works, the *Kavīndracandrikā*, and also by Marathi words in Kavīndra's *Padacandrikā*, a commentary on Daṇḍin's *Daśakumāracarita*. M.D. Paradkar, "Kavīndrācārya Saraswatī, a Native of Mahārāṣṭra." *Journal of the Ganganatha Jha Research Institute* 25 (1969): 377-80.

Some of Kavīndra's admirers present the Mughals in a negative light, if mildly. Predictably, given Kavīndra's feat, the oppressive taxes of the Mughals are cited frequently, often along with the fear triggered by such hardship. Most writers simply speak about royal taxes, however; only a handful note that these taxes were imposed by the Lord of Delhi (*dillīpati*) or *yavana* (foreign or Muslim) kings.[76] *Dillīpati* (and synonyms, such as *dillīśa*) was widely used in Sanskrit as a neutral or positive epithet for the Mughal emperor. The word *yavana* likewise did not have a particularly negative connotation and is invoked elsewhere in the *Kavīndracandrodaya* as a positive descriptor of Shah Jahan.[77] One writer, Jagadīśa Jānīka, refers to Kavīndra "raising up the Hindu bulls who were drowning in a sea of barbarians (*mlecchas*)."[78] However, even this division of barbarians from "Hindus" (whether that means Brahmans, non-Muslim Indians, or all Indians here)[79] seems more of a rhetorical device to honor Kavīndra than a strong condemnation of the Mughals. Nobody mentions Shah Jahan's destruction of a temple (or possibly multiple temples) in Benares in 1632.[80] Several writers refer to the darkness of the current age, typically to laud Kavīndra's victory over such depravity, although none connects this degradation directly with Mughal rule.[81]

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76 For mentions of *yavanas* in relation to Mughal taxes, see *Kavīndracandrodaya*: verses 7, 21, 85, and 210.

77 Verse 59 of the *Kavīndracandrodaya* refers to Shah Jahan as "lord of the *yavanas*" (*yavanādhipa*), "lord of Delhi" (*dillīśa*), and "best of men" (*naravara*).

78 Ibid.: verse 83 (*mlecchāmbhonidhimagnahaindavavṛṣoddhārāya*).

79 The word *hindū* was originally a Perso-Arabic term that entered Sanskrit in the mid-fourteenth century. It was used widely in Sanskrit by the mid-seventeenth century, although its exact valence depended on the context. Writing in the early seventeenth century, Kavi Karṇapūra defined the Persian term *hindū* as "theistic Indians" (*hindū viprādir āstiko lokaḥ*) in his *Saṃskṛtapārasīkapadaprakāśa*, ed. H. Yogi (Kashi: Goraksatilla Yogapracarini, 1952): verse 222.

80 Several earlier scholars cited Shah Jahan's tax on Hindu pilgrims to Benares and Prayag as part of the supposed wider Mughal persecution of Hindus, which also included temple destruction (Sharma, "Forgotten Event of Shah Jahan's Reign": 54, and Raghavan, "Kavīndrācārya Sarasvatī": 159). More recently, scholars have effectively disposed of the idea that the Mughals led any systematic, religion-based attack on Hindus. In contrast, as Richard Eaton has shown, Mughal temple destructions were primarily political rather than religious acts. R. Eaton, "Temple Desecration and Indo-Muslim States." In *Beyond Turk and Hindu: Rethinking Religious Identities in Islamicate South Asia*, ed. D. Gilmartin and B.B. Lawrence (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000): 246-81.

81 See mentions of the Kali Yuga (e.g., *Kavīndracandrodaya*: verses 82, 96, 192, 193, 283, 291, 292, 294, 319, and prose p. 25). Other scholars have pointed to instances in which actions by Islamicate figures that harmed Brahmanical or Jain communities were

Numerous writers in the *Kavīndracandrodaya* portray the Mughals in a positive light. A few mention Shah Jahan by name and appropriate honorifics.[82] More commonly, the writers simply refer to the king as a powerful and victorious monarch and even a universal emperor (*sārvabhauma*).[83] A few extol the Mughals as compassionate in certain acts, such as honoring Kavīndra with the title "treasure house of knowledge" (*vidyānidhāna*).[84] While such mentions may seem the opposite of those who condemn Mughal tax policies, the two approaches actually have much in common. Neither group of authors offers many details about the Mughals, preferring instead to use well-worn Sanskrit ways of describing and accommodating an "Other."[85]

One poet, Hīrārāma Kavi, goes much further than his contemporaries in openly discussing the Mughals. He penned three verses for the *Kavīndracandrodaya*. In the first, he mentions that Kavīndra had relations with both Shah Jahan and his son Dara Shikuh, at the time the heir apparent:

> [Kavīndra] brought Glorious Shah Jahan, the best of kings, under his own control. Shah Dara Shikuh certainly also approached [Kavīndra] and was instructed. The sole cause of releasing the grasp of taxes reinstated on Prayag and Kashi is that glorious Kavīndra, the teacher of poets, king of Benares. May he be victorious![86]

In praising Kavīndra for controlling Shah Jahan, Hīrārāma probably intended to insinuate the tax relief. Kavīndra surely encountered Dara Shikuh at Shah Jahan's court, and, given the prince's interest in the Upaniṣads and other

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subsumed under the explanation of the degradation of the Kali Yuga; e.g., P. Granoff, "Tales of Broken Limbs and Bleeding Wounds: Responses to Muslim Iconoclasm in Medieval India." *East and West* 41 (1991): 189-203.

82 For example, *śrīmatsāhijahāṃdilīpa, śrīnṛpasāhajāha* (*Kavīndracandrodaya*: verses 116 and 156, respectively).

83 By the Mughal period, *sārvabhauma* had arguably become synonymous with the Mughals. Writing in the seventeenth century, Veṇīdatta equates *sārvabhauma* and *dillīpati*. *Pañcatattvaprakāśa*, Rome, Biblioteca Nazionale, MS Orientali 172, fol. 1b, verse 18, printed in *The Sanskrit Grammar and Manuscripts of Father Heinrich Roth S.J. (1620-1668): Facsimile Edition of Biblioteca Nazionale, Rome, Mss. Or. 171 and 172*, ed. A. Camps and J.-C. Muller (Leiden: Brill, 1988).

84 *Kavīndracandrodaya*: verse 116.

85 The standard account of Sanskrit ways of describing Muslims is Chattopadhyaya, *Representing the Other?*

86 *Kavīndracandrodaya*: verse 169.

Sanskrit texts,[87] the two men probably had some relationship. Kavīndra's own *Kavīndrakalpalatā* contains verses that laud Dara Shikuh, as well as philosophical verses that were perhaps intended for Dara's edification.[88] In mentioning Dara here, Hīrārāma alludes to Dara Shikuh's status as the favored son of Shah Jahan and as heir apparent. Hīrārāma's third verse acknowledges Kavīndra's prowess in debate, perhaps alluding to the religious debates at the Mughal court that I discuss above.[89]

Hīrārāma's second verse deserves particular attention as arguably the most unique and the most compelling verse in the entire *Kavīndracandrodaya*. Here Hīrārāma lists various social and ethnic groups present at Shah Jahan's court, drawing upon both old and new categories in order to express the heterogeneous composition of the Mughal elite:

> In the assembly of Glorious King Shah Jahan, those born in Kashmir, Iraq, Karaskara,[90] Darada,[91] Khurasan, and Habshan (Abyssinia), Bengalis, Arabs, Firangis (Westerners), Turks, Shakas (Scythians), Badakhshanis, Multanis, those from Balkh, Qandaharis, even the lords of Kabul who rule the earth, Magas (Iranians), and Ottomans, O Kavīndra, they all praise you.[92]

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87 S. D'Onofrio, "A Persian Commentary to the Upaniṣads: Dārā Šikōh's *Sirr-i Akbar*." In *Muslim Cultures in the Indo-Iranian World During the Early-Modern and Modern Periods*, ed. F. Speziale, and D. Hermann (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 2010): 533-63.

88 D. Sharma, "Kavīndrakalpalatā, a Hindī Work by Kavīndrācārya Sarasvatī." *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* 26 (1945): 153-54. Kavīndra also has verses in his *Kavīndrakalpalatā* that mention other Mughal figures, including Murad, possibly Jahanara, and even one "Sayyad Hayat Khān" (mentioned by Sharma in "Kavīndrakalpalatā": 154).

89 *Kavīndracandrodaya*: verse 171.

90 The Karaskaras served in Yudhiṣṭhira's household. *The Mahābhārata for the First Time Critically Edited* [*Mahābhārata*], ed. V.S. Sukthankar et al. 19 vols. (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1933-): 2.46.21. Later literature identifies their origins as near the Narmada river valley, in central India, see *The Dharmasūtras: The Law Codes of Āpastamba, Gautama, Baudhāyana, and Vasiṣṭha*, ed. P. Olivelle (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999): app. 11, p. 343. However, the listing of Karaskara here, surrounded by areas outside of the Subcontinent or on its northern fringes, suggests that Hīrārāma may have had another location in mind.

91 Darada is near Kashmir, and the Darada people appear in many Sanskrit texts, including *Kalhaṇa's Rājataraṅgiṇī: A Chronicle of the Kings of Kaśmīr*, ed. A. Stein (Mirpur, Azad Kashmir: Verinag, 1991): 1.312 and 7.911.

92 *Kavīndracandrodaya*: verse 170. I translate *rūṃmaśāmāḥ*, literally the "Empire of Rome," as "Ottomans." Cf. a similar use of the term in Marathi a few decades later, quoted by S. Guha in "Conviviality and Cosmopolitanism: Recognition and Representation of 'East' and 'West' in Peninsular India C.1600-1800." In *Cosmopolitismes en Asie du Sud. Sources,*

This list contains a variety of traditional Sanskrit classifications alongside more contemporary and definitively Perso-Islamic additions. The Karaskaras, Daradas, and Shakas appear in classical Indian texts, and the latter two are even said to have fought in the *Mahābhārata* war.[93] Many other groups were more recently introduced into the Sanskrit imaginaire, including the imported Persian term *firangī* (*phiraṅga* in Sanskrit), meaning Europeans.[94] Hīrārāma also displays a nuanced appreciation of various places in Central Asia that were politically salient identity markers in Mughal culture.

Hīrārāma Kavi was one of the few *Kavīndracandrodaya* poets also to contribute verses to the *Kavīndracandrikā*, the parallel collection of Hindi praises. In the *Kavīndracandrikā*, Hīrārāma offers a Hindi verse that lists an assortment of place names similar to his Sanskrit verse. In the Hindi verse, members of these groups are not at Shah Jahan's court. Hīrārāma instead enumerates the places to which Kavīndra's fame has traveled. He includes "Anga, Bengal, Kalinga, and Darada, Firanga (the West), Kabul, Badakhshan, Multan, Tibet, Balkh, Habshan, Iran, the Ottoman Empire, and Iraq."[95] A few contrasts between Hīrārāma's Sanskrit and Hindi verses are noteworthy. Slightly fewer places are mentioned in Hindi, although this could be the result of metrical constraints. Most significantly, when writing in Sanskrit, a notably inward-looking tradition, Hīrārāma imagines representatives of various places at a definitively Indian location, namely the Mughal court. In contrast, in Hindi he writes about Kavīndra's fame traveling outward to the rest of the world. The cosmopolitan and the vernacular offered different resources for representing a changing world, within India and beyond.

Even in Sanskrit, Hīrārāma is an outlier. Nobody else in the *Kavīndracandrodaya* seemed to follow his lead in introducing Mughal ethnic and social groups into Sanskrit. One writer whom we have encountered already, Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa Gurjara, describes Shah Jahan's court as "luminescent with many kings" but does not elaborate further.[96] In contrast to Hīrārāma,

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itinéraires, langues (*XVI^e-XVIII^e siècle*), ed. C. Lefèvre, I. Županov, and J. Flores (Paris: Editions de l'EHESS, 2015).

93 The Daradas and Shakas are listed among the warriors in many places (e.g., *Mahābhārata*: 7.19.7-8). Also note 1.165.35-36, where the Shakas and Daradas are said to have been born from the wishing-cow through Vasiṣṭha's power.

94 Raghavan takes *phiraṅga* here as meaning the Portuguese in particular ("Kavīndrācārya Sarasvatī": 161), but, given the range of Westerners who visited Shah Jahan's court, I think it more likely that Hīrārāma meant Europeans generally.

95 *Kavīndracandrikā*, ed. K. Divakar (Pune: Maharashtra Rashtrabhasha Sabha, 1966): verse 24.

96 *bhūribhūbhṛcchubhāyāṃ, Kavīndracandrodaya*: verse 318.

one writer openly invokes a pilgrimage-based geography of India, mentioning places such as Pushkar and Naimisha.[97] Mughal place names appear elsewhere in Sanskrit, although rarely as densely as Hīrārāma gives them. For example, Harideva Miśra, author of a praise poem for Jahangir, offers an alphabetical list of about seventy-five places in or near the Subcontinent, including Khash and Khurasan.[98] Persian writers in Shah Jahan's court, such as Chandar Bhān Brahman, enumerated the diverse groups at the imperial court, although they typically omitted traditional Sanskrit classifications and listed Indian and non-Indians separately.[99] Open, detailed recognition of the Mughal imperial reality was a limit of what it was possible to include within Sanskrit historical memory.

4 History and Memory in Early Modern Sanskrit

Having explored the *Kavīndracandrodaya* at some length, I now want to step back and offer a few thoughts on what this text can tell us about historical practices in early modern India. This work was envisioned for an audience far beyond Kavīndra and constitutes one of the few Sanskrit works that Brahmans authored specifically on their relations with the Mughals. It occupies an important place in the early modern Sanskrit tradition as a self-conscious attempt to write about cross-cultural events for the benefit of current and future generations. In short, it is a historical work. The *Moonrise of Kavīndra* is many other things also—an exuberant encomium, an anthology of poetry, and an opportunity to display literary skills. But we lack, in particular, an understanding of historical writing in early modern India, including useful methods with which to approach such works. Here I highlight a few key aspects of writing about real-world events in early modern Sanskrit and draw out their implications for contemporary scholarship.

First, writing about cross-cultural relations was a contested practice in the Sanskrit tradition. What could be said—and, perhaps more crucially, what should be left out—were controversial issues. The *Kavīndracandrodaya*, with its more than seventy authors, offers acute insight into some of the perceived

97 Ibid.: verse 223.

98 Harideva Miśra, *Jahāṅgīravirudāvalī*, ed. J. Pathak (Allahabad: Ganganatha Jha Kendriya Sanskrit Vidyapithan, 1978): 2-3.

99 See, e.g., Chandar Bhān's *Chahār chaman* ("Four Gardens"), quoted and translated in R. Kinra, "Handling Diversity with Absolute Civility: The Global Historical Legacy of Mughal *Ṣulḥ-i Kull*." *The Medieval History Journal* 16/2 (2013): 253-54.

limits of Sanskrit literature for the Brahmanical community, especially when we have only a single author exploring ideas that are absent from other contributions, such as the mention of Kavīndra's financial compensation from Shah Jahan or the enumeration of the ethnic and regional groups present at the royal court. Such dissenting voices can be few and far between, but we often make the mistake of characterizing Sanskrit as a cohesive tradition with agreed-upon rules. On the contrary, people frequently held different visions of what was appropriate, and some pushed back against received practices. Crucially, these disagreements did not happen in a vacuum. Rather, there were important cultural stakes in terms of community identity, the constitution of the Sanskrit literary tradition, and the impacts of cross-cultural encounters tied to the creation of quasi-historical Sanskrit records.

The disputed nature of historical memory concerning the Indo-Persian world in early modern Sanskrit culture becomes even clearer in light of other collections of verses from the same period. Most Sanskrit anthologies are not devoted to a specific individual or event, but many mention Perso-Islamic figures. For instance, the *Rasikajīvana* includes a verse in praise of Akbar by an author known as Akbarīya Kālidāsa (Akbar's Kālidāsa). Other mid-seventeenth-century anthologies, including the *Padyaveṇī* and Harikavi's *Subhāṣitaratnāvalī*, contain several additional verses by this curiously titled individual.[100] The *Padyaveṇī* also records praises of the martial prowess of Jahangir and Parvez, a son of Jahangir who was a serious contender for the Mughal throne before drinking himself to death in 1626.[101] Some compilations of Sanskrit verses were created under cross-cultural patronage. For example, Caturbhuja compiled the *Rasakalpadruma* ("Wishing-Tree of Aesthetic Emotion") in the late seventeenth century, on the orders of Shaysta Khan, Aurangzeb 'Alamgir's maternal uncle.[102] The *Rasakalpadruma* includes verses devoted to many Mughal figures and even earlier Islamicate kings, such as the fourteenth-century Ghiyas al-Din Tughluq.[103] This Sanskrit collection also features several verses attributed directly to Shaysta Khan, which introduces the possibility of Persianate figures participating in the Sanskrit tradition as

100 Athavale notes the inclusion of lines by Akbarīya Kālidāsa in Harikavi's *Subhāṣitaratnāvalī* (introd. to *Kavīndrakalpadruma*: v). On Akbarīya Kālidāsa, see also J.B. Chaudhuri, *Muslim Patronage to Sanskritic Learning* (Calcutta: Pracyavani, 1954): 33-45.

101 Veṇīdatta, *The Padyaveṇī: Critically Edited for the First Time*, ed. J.B. Chaudhuri (Calcutta: Pracyavani, 1944): verses 153 (on Jahangir) and 159 (on Parvez).

102 Caturbhujamiśra writes about wanting to please Shaysta Khan in *Rasakalpadruma*, ed. B. Mishra (New Delhi: Eastern Book Linkers, 1991): p. 4, verse 10.

103 For the verse on Ghiyas al-Din Tughluq, see *Rasakalpadruma*: p. 205, verse 14.

authors, in addition to being patrons, benefactors, and interlocutors.[104] These works, along with the *Kavīndracandrodaya*, negotiated a rarely agreed-upon issue: how should the reality of Brahman-Mughal relations be reflected in the Sanskrit literary tradition? Overwhelmingly, the answer involved integrating imperial figures and cross-cultural ties into accepted literary frameworks. The challenge today is to recover the meanings of those conventions, including the possibilities for contestation and novelty.

In continuing to think through the disputed nature of historical memory in Sanskrit, there are significant overlaps, differences, and connections with vernacular traditions that deserve further investigation. The Sanskrit praises for Kavīndra have a compelling counterpart in Hindi, and the two have yet to be compared in detail. Further research will need to take into account Kavīndra's own mixed feelings on vernacular composition. On the one hand, he was unique among Sanskrit literati of the time in writing in Hindi, but, on the other, he disavowed the activity as merely "for the sake of others."[105] Kavīndra's discomfort notwithstanding, historical writing in various linguistic traditions was on the rise in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century India. This trend was not confined to the Mughal Empire; in many ways, the most compelling scholarship to date concerns South Indian sources and their dynamic approaches to representing reality in literature.[106] While it poses practical challenges for modern scholars, we may be served best by considering emerging literary practices and genres as cutting across linguistic lines.

Nonetheless, there were often important differences between the contents of vernacular and Sanskrit sources. Kavīndrācārya served the Mughals as a vernacular singer in addition to being a representative of a Sanskrit-using community, and his singing is known primarily from Persian sources. We have a similar situation for one of Kavīndra's contemporaries, Jagannātha Paṇḍitarāja, who is perhaps the best-known Sanskrit poet and literary theoretician of the seventeenth century. Yet he is remembered in the Persian tradition as a vernacular singer. His name appears in two Persian-language court histories from Shah Jahan's reign, where he is known as Jagannāth Kalāvant or Jagannāth Kabrāy, a singer of vernacular *dhrupad*s. There are even fourteen *dhrupad*s in a collection

104 *Rasakalpadruma*: pp. 294 (*śāntarasa*), 311 (*saṃkīrṇa*), and the rest *anyokti*: pp. 330, 332, 343 (two verses), and 345.

105 *Kavīndrakalpalatā* quoted in Busch, "Hidden in Plain View": 289. Pollock makes the point that Kavīndra stood out for his bilingual writing ("Languages of Science": 28).

106 Most notably, V.N. Rao, D.D. Shulman, and S. Subrahmanyam, *Textures of Time: Writing History in South India* (New York: Other Press, 2003). While this book's thesis is seldom fully accepted by scholars, it has provoked much productive scholarship.

from the late seventeenth century attributed to Jagannāth Kabrāy, and a collection of his *bhajan* songs is extant in a single manuscript in Baroda.[107] A Braj Bhasha work dated to 1673 details Jagannātha Paṇḍitarāja's life and confirms that the singer and poet were indeed the same person.[108] R.B. Athavale reports on this work that is now inaccessible to scholars, a biography of Vallabhācārya titled *Sampradāyakalpadruma*. The metered text reviews Jagannātha's ancestry, his early education in poetry and philosophy (*nyāya*), and his famed musical skills. The Braj Bhasha work also corroborates a long-standing rumor in the Sanskrit tradition, that Jagannātha enraged many of his contemporaries by marrying a Muslim woman.[109]

In light of the selective nature of many sources, we need to draw on numerous archives to reconstruct the lives of people, such as Jagannātha and Kavīndra, who operated in multiple cultural contexts. Only multilingual research can help us generate a more accurate picture of the past. Moreover, working in multiple languages and archives promises to reveal the sorts of things that were typically deemed appropriate to be mentioned in specific linguistic traditions and how historical memories were formed through both inclusion and omission. For instance, the *Kavīndracandrodaya* contains enough scattered information to reconstruct the basic contours of Kavīndra's courtly activities, but most of the authors omit key details, especially Kavīndra's vernacular singing, his financial arrangement with Shah Jahan, and descriptions of the Mughal imperial milieu. In contrast, Persian chronicles comfortably incorporated such topics but omitted altogether Kavīndra's Sanskrit abilities, the tax relief for Hindu pilgrims, and Kavīndra's status among learned Brahmans of the period.

More profoundly, the *Kavīndracandrodaya* offers no larger context for Kavīndra's cross-cultural links. Of the work's dozens of authors, none gives any indication of the nearly century-long history of Mughal-Brahmanical relations. There is no mention of the long-standing Mughal interest in Sanskrit intellectuals and knowledge systems, nor is there any recognition that all of Kavīndra's activities at court—soliciting royal orders, singing, and teaching Sanskrit

107 F.N. Delvoye mentions Jagannātha's *dhrupad*s collected in the *Anūpasaṅgītaratnākara* in "Les chants dhrupad en langue Braj des poètes-musiciens de l'Inde moghole." In *Littératures médiévales de l'Inde du nord*, ed. F. Mallison (Paris: Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1991): 169. Pollock mentions the *bhajan* collection, titled *Kīrtanapraṇālīpadasaṃgraha* ("Languages of Science": 42 n. 31).

108 On this Braj Bhasha work, see R.B. Athavale, "New Light on the Life of Paṇḍitarāja Jagannātha." *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* 48-49 (1968): 418.

109 Sheldon Pollock discusses Jagannātha's mentions of this woman in his poetry in "Sanskrit Literary Culture from the Inside Out." In *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia*, ed. S. Pollock (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003): 97-98.

texts—had substantial precedents among Mughal-affiliated Sanskrit literati. Instead, the panegyrists provide a context dominated by Sanskrit literary conventions, references to well-known myths, and other self-referential cultural and literary features. A few explicit historical details slip through, but they stand out against a largely traditional backdrop. Kavīndra gaining tax breaks from Shah Jahan was an event special enough to be remembered in Sanskrit but primarily through a host of time-honored approaches and self-consciously timeless tropes.

Modern scholars often invoke the strength of tradition and conventions when analyzing premodern and early modern Indian texts, as I have here, but our ideas of how novelty worked within specific genres, languages, and communities remain surprisingly fuzzy. My analysis of the *Kavīndracandrodaya* demonstrates the need to read conventions for both their long literary history and their more pointed political resonances. For example, Mauni Viśveśvara Bhaṭṭa borrowed his contribution from Bāṇa's *Kādambarī* and expected educated readers, above all Kavīndra, to recognize and appreciate this literary reference. But he also punctuated his borrowing with a call for Kavīndra to "live long like a king," an appeal that invoked the specific imperial context of Kavīndra's negotiations with Shah Jahan.[110] Others spoke of Kavīndra's great learning, a classic way of praising a pandit but also of particular relevance in this case, given that it was partly erudition that enabled Kavīndra to gain the ear of Shah Jahan. In such references, tradition and novelty coexisted fruitfully as authors carefully deployed stock tropes to speak to specific historical circumstances.

The *Kavīndracandrodaya* also compels us to recognize diversity within traditions. Anthologies, with their multiple authors, are particularly useful in this regard. The *Kavīndracandrodaya* shows that, while many mid-seventeenth-century Brahmans who knew Sanskrit were conservative in their literary production, some were bolder. In the authors who chose to describe those present at Shah Jahan's court or note that Kavīndra instructed the Mughals in Sanskrit texts, we can see at work the uneven process of making history. Given our limited information about the reception of the *Kavīndracandrodaya*, we have little sense of how this bold work was received, but it seems reasonable to suppose that early modern readers would have noticed the same variety of views that I have highlighted here. Above all, the message was that certain aspects of the Indo-Persian realm were now a subject of debate in the Sanskrit literary universe.

110 *Kavīndracandrodaya*: 25.

While the *Kavīndracandrodaya* honors a real-world event, it is self-consciously a literary creation. Many Sanskrit writers viewed representation and aesthetics as key concerns in writing about the world, sometimes irrespective of empirical truth and other times as the best way of expressing historical truth. We ought not to miss the more basic point embedded in this encomium's existence, which is that, contrary to many modern assumptions, Sanskrit writers were highly engaged with on-the-ground reality and responded in a variety of ways to Indo-Islamic rule. The *Kavīndracandrodaya* showcases more than seventy intellectuals of its day commemorating in Sanskrit literature Kavīndra's cross-cultural, political feat at the Mughal court. But the form of these responses is more interesting than the mere fact of their existence. In order to analyze this work properly, we must overcome our modern obsession with historical accuracy. This preoccupation has even led some scholars to try to locate a form of code-switching in premodern Indian texts, whereby authors neatly transitioned from a literary to a historical mode.[111] Such approaches miss altogether how many precolonial authors went about producing history, not in spite of their literary inheritances but rather through these rich traditions complete with tropes, repetition, and aesthetic expectations.

Privileging—and even trying to distinguish—a straight account of the facts fails to capture the early modern Brahmanical emphasis on the power of texts to shape both memory and future realities. I intend no condemnation here of Sanskrit historical methods as imprecise. Rather, texts such as the *Kavīndracandrodaya* push us to recognize that history in early modern India was a more fluid, dynamic, and creative category than we typically allow today.[112] The contributors to the *Moonrise of Kavīndra* largely agreed on the need to recast Kavīndra's relations with Shah Jahan and other imperial figures in a Sanskrit literary framework, although, in the end, they hardly present a uniform picture. For some, such as Hīrārāma, accuracy and its associated innovation may have been a significant goal. But, for many early moderns, brute reality was too limiting. Brahmanical writers turned to the malleability of Sanskrit literature and the balance afforded by standard tropes and traditional formulations in order to reimagine an increasingly Indo-Persian world in culturally intelligible terms. Significant novelty arose out of these efforts, but the central project was not conceived as adapting Sanskrit modes of writing and expression to accommodate the Mughal world. Rather, the authors of

111 Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam, *Textures of Time*.

112 Many Indologists (e.g., Allison Busch, Prachi Deshpande, Sumit Guha, Christian Novetzke, and Ramya Sreenivasan) have underscored the importance of memory and the fuzzy boundary between history and fiction in precolonial India.

the *Kavīndracandrodaya* strove to incorporate the Mughals and cross-cultural imperial engagements into Sanskrit literature, a project that brought to the surface contested ideas about constructing history in an Indian classical tongue.

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